

SEPTEMBER 7.

Mr. CHARLES MORRIS in the chair.

Thirteen persons present.

SEPTEMBER 14.

The President, Dr. LEIDY, in the chair.

Thirty-four persons present.

SEPTEMBER 21.

Mr. JOHN H. REDFIELD in the chair.

Twenty-four persons present.

The death of Wm. P. Jenks, a member, was announced.

Chinese Women and Spiritism.—The following communication was read from Miss ADELE M. FIELDE:—In the eighth month of the year, early in autumn, when the full moon is worshipped; when the gods of grain are rewarded with gifts; when friends exchange many souvenirs; when the upper and nether worlds are thought to touch boundaries, then the Chinese women meet privately and fall into trances. Nearly all women are interested in these secret sessions, but many are prevented from being present by necessary occupations elsewhere, or by fear of rebuke from the men of their households. These conclaves are entered by women only, and are regarded by men with great disfavor. The women assemble in an apartment where they may be for a few hours secure from interruption. From three to a dozen or more gather around a table in the centre of the room. Incense-sticks, spirit-money and bamboo-roots, bought by a previous contribution of farthings, are distributed among all present. A fetich of some sort, a decayed splint hat, an old broom, a chopstick, or possibly a more uncleanly object, taken from a rubbish heap, is brought in, and spirit-money is burned before it, with obeisances. Then those who desire to fall into trance sit down at the table, throw a black cloth over the head, hold a sheet of spirit-money and a lighted incense-stick between the palms before the face, shut the eyes, and remain motionless and silent. Of the other women, some light incense-sticks and whirl them around the heads of the sitters; some rap constantly, gently and rapidly, with the bamboo-roots on the edge of the table; some chant invoca-

tions, petitioning the gods to admit these their children to their abode. Many and diverse incantations are iterated. One, given to me by a woman who appeared to be an expert, may be translated as follows:

Sister spirit, ghost of nun,	Spirit, spirit, come and reach
Body take by sharing one;	Hand to lead us; vouchsafe speech;
Two or three await thee here,	Be incarnate in us here;
Choose in which thou wilt appear.	Choose in whom thou wilt appear.

Two or three of the women, perhaps, fall into trance. Their doing so is indicated by their trembling violently, dropping the incense-sticks they were holding, beginning to beat the table with the palms of their hands, and to discourse incoherently. They speak of meeting their own lost friends, or those of other women who are present. They weep bitterly while they appear to converse with the dead. They describe streets, shops and houses and say that certain persons are engaged in agriculture or trade. Sometimes they, by request, make inquiry concerning the whereabouts of a dead person, and then give the information that he has been born into the human family for the second time. Sometimes they report that a dead neighbor is shut up in Hades with nothing to eat but the salted flesh of the infant daughters she destroyed when she was alive.

Many women go to these meetings merely as observers; many more go in order to avail themselves of what they believe to be an opportunity to hear from dead relatives; a few go with the hope that they may themselves fall into trance, and see the spirit of some recently deceased friend. It is said that those who wish to enter Elysium and see the dwellings of the gods and geni, must make the attempt in the forenoon, while those who wish to visit lower spheres get admittance only in the afternoon.

As no pecuniary benefit accrues, directly or indirectly, to the actors in these scenes, there is less reason for suspecting conscious deception than in the case of the public interpreters for the gods.

No foreign lady can get access to these sittings, and no native Christian woman is admitted to them. It is said that no one falls into the trance-state, if a Monotheist be within sight or hearing. My knowledge is gained wholly from a score of Chinese women, now my pupils, who in former years attended these sittings, and who have described to me the scenes of the eighth month.

Throughout the whole there is indication that the minds of the women are, during these trances, moving in customary grooves. They evidently see what they expect to see. The gardens of Elysium are laid out in Chinese style; the architecture of the buildings is Chinese; the punishments are those made familiar to the imagination by Buddhism and Tauism; the costumes, the implements, and the paraphernalia are such as are common in Swatow. These seekers after truth in the land of shades bring

back no ideas save those which they took with them when starting on their quest; and this leads one to doubt, in spite of their disheveled hair, pallor and exhaustion, whether they have after all really been away from home.

At nightfall the supposed traveler is lured back by incantations, and then she slips slyly back into her accustomed duties, with no chance, for another whole year perhaps, to take a jaunt either with body or soul.

Swatow, China, August 1, 1886.

SEPTEMBER 28.

Mr. W. W. JEFFERIS in the chair.

Seventeen persons present.

The death of Charles Baeder, a member, was announced.

Richard H. Day was elected a member.

The following was ordered to be printed:—